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Citation: Forster, Gillian and Fenwick, John (2015) The influence of Islamic values on management practice in Morocco. *European Management Journal*, 33 (2). pp. 143-156. ISSN 0263-2373

Published by: Elsevier

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.emj.2014.04.002>  
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.emj.2014.04.002>>

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## **The Influence of Islamic Values on Management Practice in Morocco**

**Gillian Forster**  
**John Fenwick**

### **Abstract**

This article explores how Islamic values influence management and business practice in Morocco with a view to a new understanding of how one of **the** global, socio-political tides of the early Twenty-First century is now beginning to make itself felt commercially. An interpretivist approach, coupled with access to a rich and hitherto inaccessible mix of diverse and highly placed participants, allows the authors to augment extant research with a vivid rendering of the lived reality of Islamic management practice. And in consequence, sweeping monocultural generalisations about national character and practice can be refined into a nuanced and layered analysis of actual management behaviour. In order to understand how Islamic values influence management practice the findings unravel what has hitherto been presented in the extant literature as a Gordian Knot of complex influences. By putting the voices of participants ‘centre-stage’ (Alvesson 2003), the Gordian Knot is replaced by the metaphor of the Arabesque, a Moorish artform typically comprising *motifs* of flowing branches, leaves and scroll work all interlaced and entwined. Just as these typical *motifs* are ever-present in the form of the Arabesque yet take on a unique pattern in each individual depiction, so it is with the characteristics which influence management practice in Morocco. The principal motifs elicited from participants include: *‘living’ Islam* (including the interaction of Islam and personal beliefs, alongside the influence of kinship); *Islam versus Moroccan Islam* (the national culture’s ingestion of a religion); *national characteristics of family and patriarchy* (including the support that employees expect from their managers); *socio-economic factors, in particular education and gender* (life experiences including education and the home); and *foreign influences* (the impact of Western colonialism). This research identifies that these principal motifs are ever-present in their influence on management practice, yet in each individual’s case the pattern of such influence bears the unique imprint of the individual manager’s own religiosity and character.

Keywords:

Islamic Values

Patriarchy

Moroccan Management

Education

Islamic Work Ethic

# **The Influence of Islamic Values on Management Practice in Morocco**

## **1.0 Introduction:**

The following paper explores how Islamic values shape management practice in Morocco and its place in the area of cross-cultural and comparative HRD literature in which culture is of central importance to its message (Ardichvili and Kuchinke 2002) to multinational organizations and other global players on how to practise successful and culturally intelligent business on the world stage. The guiding principle of this research is that “the study of values.....reveal deep insights about how work is viewed”.(Robertson, Al-Khatib and Al-Habib 2002 p 585). Further justification for the choice of Islamic values as the focus to this study on management practice in Morocco is provided by other researchers who reveal Islam as a “unifying force” (Weir 2003 p72), “an integrating framework” (Weir 2001 p 17) or a “moral filter” (Rice 1999 p 346 for management in the Arab World, referred to as the “fourth paradigm” (Weir 2003 p 71) to distinguish Arab management from the first three paradigms of American, European and Japanese management. The aim of this research is to develop a framework for greater understanding of how different cultural contexts affect business practices. Existing research highlights that the pervasive and intensifying presence and influence of Islamic values is not just a geopolitical issue, it is also a business and management issue. Those managers working in, and with, cultures that have Islam as their “moral filter” (Rice 1999 p 346) should recognise the role Islam plays in shaping organization and management practices. However, what also must be considered is that Islamic values do not work in isolation but are an integral part of a country’s “national character” (Tayeb 1988 p 154) – an all-encompassing phrase used by Tayeb to include all of a country’s cultural, political and socio-economic (i.e. national) characteristics. All of these characteristics have a significant bearing on management styles in particular countries. Thus the scope of this research goes beyond the identification and enactment of Islamic values in the workplace and seeks additionally to identify other contextual influences (national characteristics) that also shape how managers ‘practise’ management in Morocco.

But why choose Morocco as the cultural context for the exploration of Islamic values in management practice? Although Weir (2003 p 74) identifies the countries of the Maghreb to be outside of his ‘fourth paradigm’ - i.e. the Middle East - because “their historical, administrative and linguistic traditions are different”, existing research on management in Morocco (Benson and Al Arkoubi 2006, Cox, Estrada,

Lynham and Motii 2005, d'Iribarne 2002, 2003 and Al Arkoubi 2008) indicates that Islam here plays an important role comparable to that in any other Arab country. And whilst research into Arab Management is growing and developing - for example, leadership (Abdalla and Al-Houmoud 2001, Ali 2005), features of Arab cultures (Hutchings and Weir 2006), values studies (Yousef 2000), the Islamic Work Ethic (Ali 1989, 1990), women in management (Metcalf 2006, Mostafa 2005) - Morocco continues to receive "little attention....by management scholars" (Benson and Al Arkoubi 2006). Islamic values are said to play a significant role in organizational life, but ethnographic studies (Al Arkoubi, 2008, d'Iribarne 2002, 2003) have been limited to one organization only; and other studies (Wahabi 1993), whilst providing breadth through their quantitative approach, fail to provide a full understanding for the conclusions they draw. This paper, however, provides breadth where there is depth (Al Arkoubi 2008, d'Iribarne 2002, 2003) and depth where there is breadth (Wahabi 1993) through the presentation of a qualitative study of 24 participants - all of whom are top-level managers - from 22 organizations which are both Moroccan-owned and multinational. In unravelling how Islam, and other national characteristics, shape management practice, this research contributes in two ways. First, the qualitative research approach provides findings of a depth and texture which far exceeds that of existing quantitative studies. Second, the diversity of the participants, together with their unusual seniority, embodies and illuminates the internationalisation and cross-cultural richness of management in Morocco, an aspect untouched by other researchers.

We begin this paper by providing the reader with an overview of how we developed our heuristic framework, drawing on hitherto discrete academic disciplines – anthropology, Islamic studies, business and management – to provide an all-encompassing set of sensitising concepts (Strauss and Corbin 1998) specific to Morocco for the purposes of research. We then present our research approach and findings and provide the reader with an adapted heuristic framework - the metaphor of the Arabesque - which reveal and reflects 'actual' management practice in Morocco. We conclude with our suggestions for future research.

## **2.0 Developing the heuristic framework for research**

### **2.1 What are values?**

In order to explore how Islamic values influence management practice in Morocco, it is necessary to outline our ‘working definition’ of values for research purposes. Values have been described as a “....conception, explicit, or implicit of what an individual or a group regards as desirable....” (Guth and Tagiuri, 1965 pp124-125); a preference for “certain affairs over others (Hofstede 1981 p 19); and that which “... guide and direct our behaviour and affect our daily lived experiences” (Dolan, Garcia and Richley 2006 p 27). These are, however, thumbnail ‘definitions’ and as such, they are challenging to employ in a study which seeks not only to discover the existence of values but also their enactment within a cultural context. This challenging task is further compounded by Ali’s reminder (2005 p 63) that values are often “confused with other related terms such as attitudes, beliefs, needs and norms”.

However in following Rokeach’s (1973) definition of values we are able to operationally distinguish values from concepts such as attitudes which he believes to be the favoured concept of social scientists because of the ease with which they can be researched. Rokeach provides in-depth descriptions of the nature of values, how they are integrated into organized systems, and how values refer to the mode of conduct (instrumental values) and the end-state of existence (terminal values). For Rokeach, how individuals get to their desired end-state is just as important as the end-state itself and a value is understood as that which

“is an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence (and) a value system is an enduring organization of beliefs concerning preferable modes of conduct or end-states of existence along a continuum of relative importance” (Rokeach, 1973 p 5).

Rokeach’s definition is useful but it is unwieldy compared to the brevity of others (Guth and Tagiuri 1965, Hofstede 1981, Dolan, Garcia and Richley 2006) and for our research purposes – seeking the existence of, and enactment of, values - a middle ground was sought. It is from the work of Schwartz (1994), who himself sought to modify earlier definitions, that the possibility of a ‘working definition’ of values can be discerned. Schwartz (1994) substantiates that there are indeed universal values, which act as motivators of behaviour, and he has identified and measured these in a variety of contexts, for example culturally (Schwartz 1994), cross-culturally (Schwartz and Bardi 2001, Schwartz and Sagiv 1995) and in respect of religiosity (Schwartz and Huisman 1995). Thus in this study we follow Schwartz and

subscribe to values as “desirable, transsituational goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in the life of a person or other social entity” (Schwartz, 1994 p 21).

We now introduce Morocco as our context for exploring how Islamic values influence management practice.

## **2.2 Morocco**

Morocco’s Arabic name is Maghrib meaning “land of the setting sun” (Pennell 2003 p 1). It is the most Westerly of the North African countries collectively known as the Maghreb which also includes Algeria, Tunisia and Libya. Morocco has a bicameral Parliament and, in formal terms, a constitutional monarchy but “the King has such strong powers that one could easily think of [Morocco] as an absolute monarchy” (Benson and Al Arkoubi 2006 p 277, Stewart 2011, CIA 2012). King Mohammed VI’s power derives from his family’s (the Alawis) rule since the seventeenth century and their claimed direct descent from the Prophet Mohammed. Thus, the “monarchy embodies Morocco’s Muslim consensus: Arabism, Islam and Moroccan nationalism” (Sater 2010 p 2). The socio-economic and political reforms begun in the 1990s - including greater respect for human rights and attempts to improve the economy through liberalization of trade and privatization (Cohen and Jaidi 2006, Najem 2001) – prompt some commentators to describe Morocco as able to “preserve its rich cultural heritage” and yet be “one of the Arab countries most open to Western values and intellectual movements” (Benson and Al Arkoubi 2006 p 276). Seen on the ‘inside’, Morocco is subject to familiar tensions between the secular and the religious (Sater 2010). Whilst Morocco has made considerable social, political and economic reforms, the rate of progress is slow. Corruption, patronage, poverty and unemployment remain (World Bank 2009). From this slow progress there has emerged “political alienation and disaffection” and a concomitant “rise of Islam (political Islam)” (Cohen and Jaidi 2006 p 4, Kristianasen 2012).

### **2.2.1 Moroccan culture**

Anthropologists (Clifford Geertz 1968, 1973, Hildred Geertz 1979, Gellner 1969) and historians (Pennell 2003, Munson 1993) have been engaged by Morocco’s cultural characteristics. A key focus of their work is the meaning of family and patronage (Geertz 1979) and the ingestion of Islam (Geertz 1968, Gellner 1969, Munson 1993). Geertz (1979 p 215) observed that Moroccans’ view of “family” encompasses what Americans would regard as “friendship” and “patronage”. In this way Moroccans, like many of their

Arab brothers (Muna 1980), build a network of reliable relationships upon which they can rely through life, in effect creating extended families. Geertz (1979) suggests that all three concepts of family, friend and patron readily converge. From this, Geertz (1979 p 355) observes first, that “what counts to Moroccans are actual social ties, obligations, attachments, and loyalties and the networks made up of these”; and, second, that within these extended families there is always a “patronage cluster” (Geertz 1979 p 338). At the core of the family is a “powerful and wealthy man [who] often welcomes the dependent presence of poorer kinsmen, who then take the role of retainers, running errands, overseeing the affairs of their patron, helping to serve food at feasts, and the like” (Geertz 1979 p 340). Beyond society’s elite, ‘kinship’ does not represent power and personal advancement but it does remain a safety net against misfortune - highly pertinent to business practice.

The development of Islam in Morocco also interests anthropologists and historians (Gellner 1969, Munson 1993) in their focus on a leadership style which balances “strong man politics and holy-man piety...the warrior saint” (Geertz 1968 p 8) together with the Monarch’s *soi-disant* genealogical descent from the Prophet Mohammed. Geertz (1968 p 8) suggests that since Morocco’s first substantive King, Idriss II who was “a vigorous leader and a dedicated religious purifier” there has been a fusion of the secular – the warrior – with the religious – the saint. However, leaders in Morocco not only have to display saint-like qualities, but also need *Baraka*. In the Qur’an *Baraka* means “blessing ...[and] applies to whatever God has sent down by way of guidance and revelation” (Leaman 2006 p 110). However, Geertz (1968 p 45) suggested that *Baraka* came to be understood as a “charismatic religious power” which consolidated two beliefs: that of the “wonder-working” of the saints and the “supposed lineal descent from the Prophet”. The concept of the Warrior Saint, together with the subsequent fusion of saint-like charisma and “family patrimony” to represent Moroccan *Baraka*, provided the ruling dynasties over the centuries with “the moral right to rule” (Geertz 1968 p 53) and a style of rule that has possibly influenced leadership in Moroccan organizations (Benson and Al Arkoubi 2006, d’Iribarne 1998, 2002, 2003, Al Arkoubi 2008).



### 2.3 What are Islamic values?

For the purposes of this research an identification of Islamic values had to be sufficiently robust for the purpose of analysis and exploration through the ‘lived experiences’ of the participants. This study began with the Qur’an - the “foundation” of Islam and “the very word of God” (Reinhart 1983 p 189). For any Muslim the Qur’an is *the* authoritative source about how s/he is to lead his/her life, and the rewards for following the right path. However, for two significant reasons the examination of the Qur’an, although essential, was not sufficient. First, values are not explicitly identified in the Qur’an. Baligh (1998 p 42) nonetheless maintains that values are readily inferred because the Qur’an contains “rules and from these you know what values are”. Cook similarly (2000 p 6) suggests that they present themselves as the instructions for “moral.... duties of believers”. And second, Islam as practised today is the result of centuries of study not only of the Qur’an but also of the *hadith* (contained in the *Sunna*). Despite issues of authenticity and misinterpretation, there is a clear consensus that the Qur’an cannot be understood without them (Fontaine 2008, Haleem 2005) since the *hadith* set out the practical application of the Qur’an’s lessons. Many of the *hadith* available only in their original Arabic are inaccessible to the Western researcher. Nonetheless, valuable insight is provided by another source of help: Islamic business and management research (Ali 1988, 1992, 2005, Tayeb 1997, Yousef 2000, 2001).

Ali (2005 p 63) argues that the study of values provides a “major key” to understanding organizational life, adding that studying “work values is...not merely an academic diversion, it is a practical endeavour”. To facilitate this endeavour he names the values he discerns in the Qur’an and the Prophet’s sayings and practices (*the Sunna*). These include equality, accountability, hard work, justice, consultation, trust, self-discipline, persistence and co-operation. Kalantari (1998) speaks of the meta-values of Islam, describing personal attributes including courage, generosity, humility and patience. Akhtar (1992) highlights brotherhood, justice and benevolence as key Islamic values within the workplace, and Tayeb (1997) cites the work of Latifi (1997) and Endot (1995) in which they explored the ‘lived’ Islamic values of responsibility, honesty, loyalty, co-operation and equality.

Such values are closely linked to ethics (Cooper 1979), and in Rice’s (1999) research the relationship between the two is clearly evident. For Rice (1999 p 346), Islamic values are “the filter” for moral

business behaviour. Arguing that the goals of Islam are based on well-being rather than materialism, she depicts an Islamic ethical system derived from the Qur'an and the *Sunna* and provides what she calls business examples of how these values are manifested in practice.

### ***2.3.1 The Islamic Work Ethic***

Significantly, all commentators stress the importance of business and trade to Islam (Uddin 2003, Badawi 2003, Ali 2005, 1992, 1988, Ali and Al-Owaihnan 2008, Yousef 2000, 2001). Supported by empirical research, they maintain that work “is a virtue...and is a necessity to establish equilibrium in one’s individual and social life” (Ali 1992 p 507) and that “involvement and participation in economic activities [are] not merely considered a divine call but also as a means to sustain a thriving and healthy community” (Ali and Al-Owaihnan 2008 p 8). Ali (1988, 1992) and Yousef (2000, 2001) call the Prophet’s teachings on business and work the Islamic Work Ethic (IWE). This provides a set of guidelines on how to work and to do business. Work should be done to the best of one’s ability, business and work relationships should be honest and open to promote trust, and there should be equitable treatment of employees. This IWE reflects the values identified earlier. Thus, whether labelled as values, ethics, principles or part of a framework such as the IWE, semantic debates should not obscure the considerable overlap between concepts often regarded as discrete (Ali 2005). This is illustrated in Figure One.

**Figure 1: Islamic Values in Business and Management Research**

AUTHORS	ISLAMIC VALUES	ISLAMIC/BUSINESS ETHIC	THE ISLAMIC WORK ETHIC
Ali and Al-Owaihan (2008)			Effort, competition, transparency, moral conduct, personal growth, meet deadlines, creativity, justice
Abuznaid (2009)		Goodness, righteousness, justice, truth, piety	
Ali (1988, 1992, 2005)	Equality, accountability, consultation, goodness, trust, honouring promises, sincerity, justice, hard work, humility, consensus, self-discipline, co-operation		Hard work, transparency, generosity, personal growth, justice, loyalty and commitment to family
Kalantari (1998)	Equality, social equity, justice, self-control, personal growth through constant learning, humility, trustworthiness, benevolence, kindness		
Uddin (2003)		Unity, justice, productive work, trusteeship	
Akhtar (1992)		Brotherhood, justice, benevolence, honesty, trustworthiness	
Rice (1999)		Unity, justice, trusteeship, the need for balance	
Wilson (2006)		Honesty, trust, brotherhood, equality, justice, altruism	
Badawi (2003)		Justice, consultation ( <i>shura</i> ), moral conduct	
Yousef (2000, 2001)			Co-operation, consultation, hard work, personal growth, justice, generosity
Sadeq (2001)		Brotherhood, benevolence, justice, fairness, co-operation, trust, honesty	
Naqvi (2001)		Unity, equilibrium	
Ahmad (1991)		Truth, trust, sincerity, brotherhood, justice, knowledge	
Tayeb (1997)	Self-discipline, trustfulness, honesty, resolve, loyalty and abstinence		
Sherif (1975)	Patience, self-discipline, trust, resolve, sincerity, servitude, nobility, good appearance and truthfulness		
Endot (1995)	Trustworthiness, responsibility, sincerity, cleanliness, co-operation		
Latifi (1997)	Consultation, responsibility		

## **2.4 A profile of management - Morocco in the broader pan-Arab context**

In order to contextualize our exploration of how Islamic values influence management practice in Morocco we now introduce existing research into the area. Mindful of warnings not to generalize from one country to another (Weir 2003, Mostafa 2005) existing research does suggest some key themes relevant to Morocco, including leadership, human resource management, the influence of Arab culture on organizational behaviour, issues of gender and the continuing influence of the West. These themes are not discrete: Metcalfe (2006) and Mostafa (2005) discuss women in management, Beekun and Badawi (1999) explore leadership, and Weir (2001, 2003) reflects on Arab culture and the implications for human resource development. As each weaves the argument for their particular focus of interest, it becomes apparent that other themes within the ‘fourth paradigm’ (Weir 2003) are drawn upon to provide either context and/or enhanced understanding of the phenomena they explore. Such research contains rather large assumptions about what pertains to Islam, what pertains to Arab culture, and what pertains to national culture. Sometimes no assumptions are made at all, leaving all three inextricably entwined like a Gordian Knot, and referred to as “cultural identity” (Tayeb 1997 p 352). It was the challenge of the present study to unravel this Gordian Knot in order to explore Islam’s specific role.

The following summarises existing topics in pan-Arab management research which have contributed to the theoretical underpinning of the present paper.

### **2.4.1 Families and networks**

The use of extended social networks and the expected paternal responsibilities of leaders (Muna 1980 and Abdalla and Al-Homoud 2001) have been touched upon above, but Weir (2001 p 14) elaborates by arguing that *all* Arab business and management practices are based on considering “the utilization of networks of relatives and friends”. These family networks, or connections, he calls *wasta* (Weir and Hutchings 2005 p 92). They involve “the exercise of power, influence and information sharing through social and politico-business networks”. Whilst originally *wasta* emphasized the importance of family and kinship, it is now generally perceived as a vehicle for personal gain, conducive to corruption and nepotism (Weir and Hutchings 2005).

### ***2.4.2 Approaches to women in management***

A number of studies have considered gender within the fourth paradigm (Metcalf 2006, Mostafa 2005). A key issue is the role that Islam plays in shaping women's workplace participation. Sidani (2005 p 500) observes that whilst female participation has increased in countries such as Egypt, Lebanon and Iraq, "other countries (for example Saudi Arabia [retain] strict control over women's economic and political participation". Citing research by Metle (2002), he argues that Kuwaiti women "are negatively impacted by the existing traditions and culture" and other "Arabian Gulf women are locked in restrictive traditional roles" (2005 p 501). Mostafa (2005) ascribes women's lack of workplace participation to a prevailing male-dominated Arab culture. He talks of an inherent patriarchy whereby men have "structural control over political, legal, economic and religious institutions" signifying that "Arab societies seem reluctant to abandon their traditional viewpoint of women" (Mostafa 2005 p 25). In contrast, Metcalfe's exploration of gender roles in the UAE (2006) leads her to conclude that it is Islam, not patriarchy, which is at the foundation of how women are treated in society because "social and economic reform is being guided by Islamic principles...[which encourage] separate worlds for female and male employment" (Metcalf 2006 p 100).

### ***2.4.3 The legacy of colonialism – beyond the fourth paradigm***

A prominent element in the work of Ali (1988, 1990, 1998, 1995, and 2005) is the influence of foreign powers in shaping national cultures and institutions. Anthropologists (Geertz 1968, 1973) and historians (Munson 1993, Pennell 2003, Armstrong 2002) reflect similarly on how empire-building from the Ottoman through to the British and French empires has moulded, and subsequently discarded (Weir 2003), the countries they once desired. Although several commentators (Ahmad 1991, Wilson 2006, Al-Junaid and Anwar 2000) protest against the West and its capitalist values, it is Ali (1990, 1992, and 1995) who explicitly links colonial power with the demise of 'seen' Islam in business and management practice in Islamic countries. Not only that, but "increasing contact with Western nations in recent decades" (1990 p 8) is a contributory factor to why Sidani (2005 p 498) talks of "Arab societies [being] currently in a state of confusion... in a futile search for a new identity".

## ***2.5 Management in Morocco***

Specific research on Morocco has focused on cross-cultural comparisons with other ‘Arab’ countries (Kabasakal and Bodur 2002), management values (Wahabi 1993, Ali and Wahabi 1995), aspects of human resource management and development (Cox, Estrada, Lynham and Motii 2005, Benson and Al Arkoubi 2006, Al Arkoubi and McCourt 2004, El Mansour and Wood 2010), adaptation of total quality management techniques to local cultural contexts (d’Iribarne 1998, 2002, 2003) and on leadership (Al Arkoubi 2008). The presence of Islamic values is acknowledged by all such commentators, but no clear attempt has been made to disentangle Islamic values from other influences. Such research has identified two pervasive influences on management practice in Morocco.

The first influence is “the national character” (Tayeb 1988 p 154): the combination of social, political, economic and cultural characteristics which together constitute Morocco and position the country within the contemporary global business environment. Using HRM/HRD as their focus, researchers such as Al Arkoubi and McCourt (2004), Cox, Estrada, Lynham and Motii 2005 and Benson and Al Arkoubi (2006) explore how Moroccan organizations are unable to embrace management ‘best practice’ because of their reluctance or inability to think strategically (Benson and Al Arkoubi 2006), to recruit on merit and ability rather than for reasons of patronage (Al Arkoubi and McCourt 2004) and their under investment in training and development (Cox, Al Arkoubi and Estrada 2006).

The second influence is how Islam plays a major role, implicitly or explicitly, in work practices, attitudes and styles in Moroccan management (Wahabi 1993, Ali and Wahabi 1995, Al Arkoubi 2008, d’Iribarne 1998, 2002, 2003, Cox, Estrada, Lynham and Motii 2005). Wahabi (1993) considers how Moroccan managers’ value systems have been influenced by Islam, tribal and family traditions (including patriarchy), the legacy of colonial bureaucracy, increasing contact with the West, and government intervention and political constraints. Ali and Wahabi (1995, p 95) describe Moroccan managers as “confused” in their thinking because of their seemingly equal attachment to Islamic and Western values. Wahabi (1993 p 33) is nevertheless keen to emphasise that when considering management in Morocco, the researcher must “take into consideration the impact of Islam on values and value systems”. Like other commentators they appear to be suggesting that whilst Western influence is something that makes

itself felt, it is not wholly desirable (Kabasakal and Bodur 2002), and that Moroccan organizations should be adapting leadership and management practice to that which best fits with the Moroccan culture (d'Iribarne 1998, 2002, 2003, Al Arkoubi 2008) of which Islam is a significant element.

Two writers contribute substantially to the discussion of Islam in management in Morocco by an in-depth focus on leadership. D'Iribarne (1998, 2002, 2003) researches a Moroccan firm that combines Islamic norms and values with TQM norms and values in order to transform organizational culture. Al Arkoubi (2008) provides an ethnographic study of spirituality in a large Moroccan holding. Both researchers allude to the presence within their respective organizations of the "warrior saint" leader (Geertz 1968 p 8) and the belief in "*Baraka*" (Benson and Al Arkoubi 2006 p 281) to create the culture required in a Moroccan organization. Attendant cultural characteristics include: showing respect for others' values, demonstrating fair treatment at work, expressing care and concern in and outside the organization, and appreciating the contributions of others.

To summarise discussions thus far, we have detailed our focus on Morocco; considered extant research on values and outlined our working definition of values; and considered extant research on Morocco, Islamic values and Moroccan management in relation to our exploration of Islamic values in management practice. We now introduce our heuristic framework which integrates the three areas of research as a means of enabling interpretive analysis of the participants' lived experiences.

## **2.6 Loosening the Gordian Knot – the heuristic framework**

The development of the heuristic framework was achieved in two stages. First, a silo-type design was created which represented the sensitizing concepts (Strauss and Corbin 1998) – and their respective source – from the extant research. Please see figure 2. This compendium of sensitizing concepts was a pretty full reflection of the 'contents' of the extant research on Morocco, but the neatness of this silo-design was misleading in this one rather important regard - it did not correspond with the lived management experience described by the extant research – i.e. the Gordian Knot. In 'lived reality', the operation and interplay of the sensitizing concepts identified is seemingly protean, there are no clear consistent lines of demarcation but flux, they are not discrete sites but overlapping force fields. This

‘scenario’ therefore was best sketched figuratively as a heuristic framework which represented the entwining and overlapping of these concepts. What emerged was a framework which in some way resembled the Gordian Knot provided in the pan-Arab research but it was a Gordian Knot **specific** to Morocco, and this specificity, as opposed to generalisability was more likely to ‘uncover’ the nature of the phenomenon under study. Please see figure 3.



**Figure 2: The Heuristic Framework - Silos**



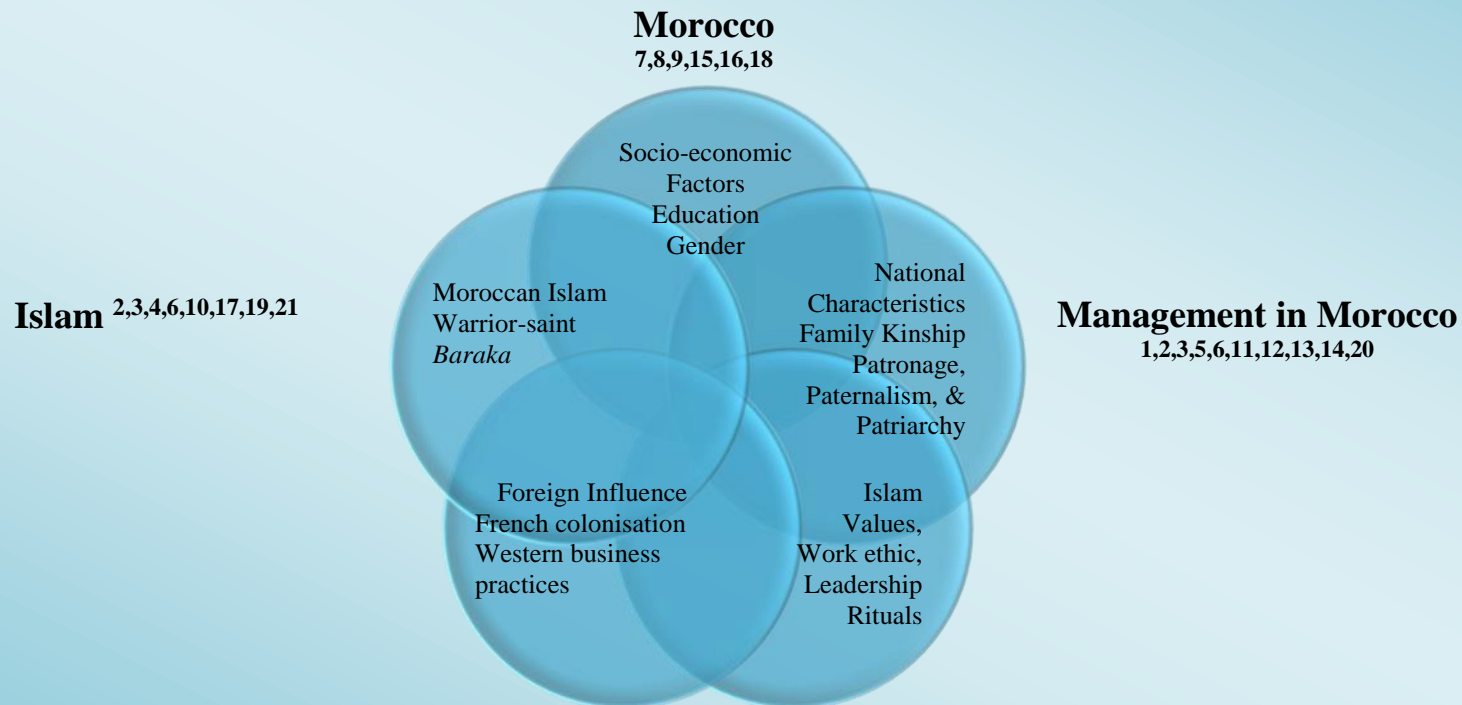
<sup>1</sup> Al Arkoubi (2008); <sup>2</sup> Ali (2009a); <sup>3</sup> Ali (2005); <sup>4</sup> Ali (1992); <sup>5</sup> Ali and Wahabi (1995); <sup>6</sup> Beekun and Badawi (1999); <sup>7</sup> Cohen and Jaidi (2006); <sup>8</sup> Geertz (1968); <sup>9</sup> Geertz (1979);

<sup>10</sup> Hourani (1985); <sup>11</sup> Hutchings and Weir (2006); <sup>12</sup> d'Iribarne (2002); <sup>13</sup> Metcalfe (2006); <sup>14</sup> Muna (1980); <sup>15</sup> Munson 1993; <sup>16</sup> Pennell (2003); <sup>17</sup> Rice (1999); <sup>18</sup> Sater (2010);

<sup>19</sup> Sadeq (2001); <sup>20</sup> Wilson (2006); <sup>21</sup> Yousef (2000)

**Figure 3: The Gordian Knot of Influences on Management Practice in Morocco (Extant Research)**

**Key Contextual Factors Shaping Management Practice:**



<sup>1</sup> Al Arkoubi (2008); <sup>2</sup> Ali (2009a); <sup>3</sup> Ali (2005); <sup>4</sup> Ali (1992); <sup>5</sup> Ali and Wahabi (1995); <sup>6</sup> Beekun and Badawi (1999); <sup>7</sup> Cohen and Jaidi (2006); <sup>8</sup> Geertz (1968); <sup>9</sup> Geertz (1979); <sup>10</sup> Hourani (1985); <sup>11</sup> Hutchings and Weir (2006); <sup>12</sup> d'Iribarne (2002); <sup>13</sup> Metcalfe (2006); <sup>14</sup> Muna (1980); <sup>15</sup> Munson 1993; <sup>16</sup> Pennell (2003); <sup>17</sup> Rice (1999); <sup>18</sup> Sater (2010); <sup>19</sup> Sadeq (2001); <sup>20</sup> Wilson (2006); <sup>21</sup> Yousef (2000)

### **3.0 Methodology**

The present study – completed in 2010 - adopted an interpretivist approach, beginning with a process of purposeful sampling (Patton 1991). The sample comprised 24 managers of great experience (both in personal career longevity and a broad range of industries and businesses) and seniority (individuals who have been highly successful and are therefore expert managers, with direct experience not just of receiving/living management policy and practice but also of themselves directly shaping and dispensing such policy and practice). The sample also represented the diverse socio-historical contexts of individual managers who manage in Morocco in order to ensure “representativeness” (Locke 2001 p 80) in the findings. Thus the sample included non-Moroccan managers. The justification for this approach is provided by Schutz (1964) and his concept of ‘the Stranger’. Schutz’s (1964 p 96) ‘Stranger’ is an immigrant trying to make sense of an unfamiliar world. The Stranger does not share “the tested systems of recipes ...[and] the culture...has never [been] an integral part of his biography” and as a result there is no “thinking-as-usual” from ‘the Stranger’. Gherardi (1996 p 190) also sees the value of what she calls “outsiders” to research situations because they are not firmly entrenched in the taken-for-granted assumptions embedded in the culture.

The interviews were loosely structured in order to “see the research topic from the perspective of the interviewee and to understand how and why they [had] come to this particular perspective” (King 2004 p 11). All but one (by telephone) of the interviews were conducted face-to-face, lasting from 45 minutes to one and a half hours. An initial study was undertaken, primarily to ‘test out’ the chosen methods and questions. Sampling for the initial study was facilitated by a “gatekeeper” (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995 p75) – the Director-General of an exclusive hotel in Marrakech – who had taken a keen interest in the research. To achieve “believability” (Brewer 2004 p 157) the location of the main study had to be Casablanca, Morocco’s industrial, commercial, and business centre.

#### ***3.1 Data interpretation and analysis***

Data were analysed using the funnel structure of progressive focusing (Miles and Huberman 1984, Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). Progressive focusing enables the researcher to ‘make sense’ of the “bulk and complexity” (Bryman and Burgess 1993 p 216) which characterise qualitative data. A process

of open and selective coding (Strauss and Corbin 1998) distils, refines and focuses the data in order to achieve some form of theory-building, and ensures that the final analysis remains “faithful [to the] “people’s voices” (Brewer 2000 pp 151-152).

Participants were characterised as belonging to one of four groups according to biographical data. There were two reasons for this. First, the amount of data was unwieldy and had to be made more manageable (Brewer 2000). Secondly, the criteria for grouping the participants in this way complemented a methodological theme of this research, that of the ‘Stranger’ (Schutz 1964). Allocation of participants to groups was not pre-planned, other than to ensure inclusion of non-Moroccan participants in the sample. After conducting the interviews it was clear that Moroccan participants could be broadly categorized as follows, based on having some form of ‘stranger’ sensibility or experience compared with a complete ‘insider’ i.e.:

- **Insiders** - Moroccan Muslim participants with only Moroccan experiences
- **Insiders-Outsiders** -Moroccan Muslim participants with work and/or education experience abroad
- **Outsiders-Insiders** - Moroccan non-Muslim participants
- **Strangers** - foreigners

**Figure 4: Participant Groups**

Pseudonym	Gender	Biographical Grouping	Type of Organization	Position in Organization	Study
Ibrahim	Man	Insider	Moroccan SME	MD/Owner	Initial
Malek	Man	Insider	Moroccan SME	MD/Owner	Initial
Aziz	Man	Insider	National Bank	Director	Initial
Jamila	Woman	Insider-Outsider	Consultancy	Director	Initial
Nicolas	Man	Stranger	Moroccan owned hotel	Director-General	Initial
Zidan	Man	Insider	Multinational	Operations Manager	Main
Uthman	Man	Insider	Multinational	Health and Safety Manager	Main
Walid	Man	Insider	Self-employed consultant		Main
Amina	Woman	Insider	Multinational	HR Director	Main
Loubna	Woman	Insider	Multinational	Sales Director	Main
Amal	Woman	Insider	Multinational	Deputy-Director General	Main
Nadia	Woman	Outsider-Insider	Self-employed consultant		Main
Ismail	Man	Insider-Outsider	Multinational	Managing Director	Main
Abdul	Man	Insider-Outsider	International Moroccan Co.	Director General/President	Main
Omar	Man	Insider-Outsider	Multinational	Country Manager	Main
Yasin	Man	Insider-Outsider	Multinational	Logistics Manager	Main
Ahmad	Man	Insider-Outsider	International Moroccan Co.	Managing Director/Owner	Main
Amir	Man	Insider-Outsider	Consultancy	Director/Joint Owner	Main
Fatiha	Woman	Insider-Outsider	Consultancy	Director General/Owner	Main
Daouia	Woman	Insider-Outsider	Multinational	Marketing and Sales Director	Main
Paul	Man	Stranger	Multinational	Country Manager	Main
Atif	Man	Stranger	Multinational	Managing Director	Main
Michael	Man	Stranger	Multinational	Country Manager	Main
David	Man	Stranger	Multinational	Country Manager	Main

The final stage of analysis was to synthesise ‘practice’ with ‘theory’ to identify ‘gaps’ between the ‘rhetoric’ of the extant research and the ‘reality’ provided by accounts from the ‘life-worlds’ of the participants managing in Morocco. Thus a picture of how Islamic values influence management

practice, derived from the views of people who actually manage in Morocco, together with how the heuristic framework can be adapted to ‘represent’ management in Morocco, was developed and is explored in the rest of this paper.

#### **4.0 Findings**

The authors have used the metaphor of The Gordian Knot to explain how, according to the extant research (Benson and Al Arkoubi (2006), Wahabi (1993), Cox, Estrada, Lynham and Motii (2005), Tayeb (1997), Robertson, Al-Khatib and Al-Habib (2001, 2002), Rice (1999) and Ali (1989)) a number of socio-economic, political and cultural influences combine to contribute to the shaping of management practice in the pan-Arab context. Just like the Gordian Knot these influences cannot be disentangled (Tayeb 1997, Wilson 2006). To what extent did the participants of this research agree with this conclusion, or provide new insight into how management practice is shaped? The findings below are recorded by each biographical grouping, starting with those Moroccan managers who have had no management or education experiences outside Morocco to shape their ‘life-world’ (Schutz 1964).

##### ***4.1 The Insiders***

Insiders believe that Islam has a presence in the workplace. As well as discussing the need to make practical arrangements for those who wish to follow the rituals of their religion, participants also highlight a number of personal values which they identify as Islamic – humility, fraternity, believing in people, and solidarity. Amal, for example, refers to the importance for her of “fraternity” and how it shapes the levels of support – visiting sick employees, providing financial help, etc – that she provides. “Moroccans view organizations like their family” she believes. Zidan refers to the Islamic values of trust and respect, believing them to be inextricably linked with (Moroccan) family values, and also necessary within an organization in order to develop “special relationships”, relationships which

“happen when people support one another; they come from the ability to apologize [for mistakes], to take responsibility for...actions and to treat people like family”.

He provides the example of a merger during which he helped the Finance Manager from the “takeover company to understand what was happening in [my] factory”. He now has a “special relationship” with

the Finance Manager who refers to Zidan and circumvents Zidan's superior on all budget matters, thus making Zidan's job much easier.

However, Zidan and Walid express the view that the aforementioned values are no different from those of other monotheistic religions. Zidan explains,

“If you take Islam and you analyse Islam and you transcribe all the values, you will see that all the principles and business values in multinational companies...are included in the Islamic values, the same as Christian, or Jewish values. Because religion is all about being just and fair.”

For Zidan and Walid, Islamic values influence management practice just as the values of any religion might do so, because they are generic values.

Islam is also 'seen' to shape business, although contradictions between Islam and business practices are perceived. From the voices of the majority of Insiders, it emerges that two forms of management practice exist: first the 'traditionally Moroccan' one of patriarchy and/or paternalism; and second, one which is the result of a participative management style, i.e. encouraging team-working, joint decision-making, taking responsibility etc. The latter is the preferred management style of all participants. Which practice is 'enacted' would appear to depend upon employee attitudes prevalent in the workplace. These attitudes include: resistance to change; expectations of authority; respect for elders; and reluctance or inability to make decisions. Such attitudes demand the patriarchal/paternalistic management style that the participants describe and these attitudes are described as 'typically Moroccan'. Yasin explains that

“You need a controlling type of leadership because... [to] make people comfortable... [encourage people to] decide for themselves and take initiatives... they take it as a weakness in you.”

During his interview, Zidan attempted to unravel the entwined Islamic and cultural values to provide what he sees as the 'ideal' management style for Moroccans; one which encourages trust, respect and loyalty with a powerful father figure in control.

Zidan talks of the tradition of “taking someone in” at home, in business, or both:

“The most important industrial local groups...you will always find someone who has started with their father [i.e. the founder of the business] who is still there...If you ask the big boss he will say... that guy built the company with our father...took risks for our father...I know what I am paying him for.”

Participants also reflected on how some employees in the workplace did show the ability to be innovative and to make decisions. And what they considered to be at the root of these different attitudes are age and education levels. Education, together with certain cultural expectations of women, is also seen to be at the source of the challenges that women face in the workplace as they strive to find their place in business.

France is widely seen to be a residual influence on management practices owing to the evidence of hierarchy in many Moroccan organizations.

#### ***4.2 The Insiders-Outsiders***

For this group of participants, the juxtaposition of the traditional and the modern is a key theme. Participants seek to describe how, in Morocco, there are two ways of managing; the traditional and the more modern or Western approaches. And how there are two interpretations of Islam, that which is entwined with Moroccan culture and that which is more ‘pristine’ in nature. These themes of Islam, culture, modern management techniques, traditional ways of doing business commingle and overlap to present a rich and vivid picture of management in Morocco.

In the life-worlds of some of the participants Islam is a powerful force which shapes their management philosophy (Abdul) and how they do business (Ahmad).

Abdul provides the best example of how an individual’s religious beliefs shape and mould management practices. He is acutely and actively aware of ‘living’ his Islamic values – he learned the lessons from his father:

“My father was incredible – a rich Tradesman and a [University] Professor ... he was an intellectual, he taught religion, and a successful businessman. I learned from him to do business with *morale* – with rules, respect ... with transparency ... we can win business by being honest, and developing trust and relationships with people.”

When asked about Islamic values and his personal values, he makes no distinction between them: the importance of family, the importance of business, honesty, striving for continuous personal growth through learning (*itjihad*) and co-operation. Abdul’s practice embodies the Islamic work ethic in its



transparency and respect for the client. His approach to his staff is to encourage them to learn new skills and to progress - to become partners in the company:

“People know here that they are encouraged to move ahead, to learn, to improve, and they know that if they do they become shareholders...”

However, whilst Abdul consciously integrates the ‘theory’ of Islam into his ‘practice’ and ‘lives’ the values underpinning the Islamic work ethic Ahmad provides examples of how he experiences ‘ingested’ Islam. Ahmad explains that the vestiges of Islam evident in his business – that of distribution – are exemplified for him in the desire for *Baraka* when doing business:

“Morocco is, regards distribution, still traditional 80%. We have 100,000 small shops in Morocco, [plus] the wholesalers...the semi-wholesalers, where their *philosophe* is that they want to come and do business with a company with Islamic values. They want to buy from someone who has the *Baraka*. If you are a good person, if you are religious, if God is with you, I will prosper.”

For other Insiders-Outsiders, there is an acknowledgement that the values underpinning their practice are Islamic values, but as devotees of the modern as opposed to the traditional they follow these values in the name of professionalism and ethical behaviour rather than of Islam. For example, Fatiha and Ismail cite the values of honesty, trust, family, tolerance, and respect for, and co-operating with, others. These values are not dissimilar to those of Abdul and are Islamic in nature. However, the view that Ismail, especially, has of himself as an ‘Islam carrier’ is limited. Whilst Fatiha considers “ethics rather than Islam when [she] is managing”, Ismail - unlike Abdul - explicitly rejects any direct association of his beliefs and values with religion. Instead, he strongly regards them as “personal principles to manage by [sic] and I follow logic and reason”.

Some show a mindset which is so ‘modern’ and secular that efforts are made to take Islam’s overt ‘presence’ out of the organization because of what that ‘presence’ represents. In particular, Yasin and Ismail express their dislike of the “public exhibition of faith” such as the wearing of the hijab which they regard as a “sign of closed thinking when organizations need to be more open”. They admit this view impacts upon their recruitment and selection of employees.

For Insiders-Outsiders, culture as well as Islam demonstrably shapes management practice, but how it does so, depends on education – education abroad, but also in the home. As Omar explains:

“We don’t learn how to be honest and trustworthy... if they are not being taught in the family they will not be seen in the workplace. Because [Moroccans] live at home...they have no sense of responsibility...they are also weak in taking initiatives. They are living...with a father who makes all the rules...there is no sense of accountability...”

A foreign education has revealed to many of these participants a different way of being, and they live this learned ‘openness’ and ‘independence’ in their management practices - or at least try to.

A further point of discussion deriving from the religious-culture-education mix is that of attitudes towards women in the workplace. Fatiha opines that Moroccan men “think they are influenced by their religion and this influences their attitude to the women they work with. They regard women as inferior”, but she argues that “this attitude of men here is not the true Islam. It’s cultural to lower women...”.

Like the Insiders, Insiders-Outsiders also stress how important it is for Moroccans to feel that the organization is one big happy family. For instance, Ismail likes to “develop a family atmosphere” at work, organizing social events to support this. Fatiha believes that Moroccans have “empathy, friendliness and hospitality...an organization is like a family”.

#### ***4.3 The Outsider-Insider***

Nadia voices the recurrent themes of the tension between the traditional and the modern and the presence of Islam in the workplace. However, she personally perceives the characteristics of hospitality and family to be cultural and very much distinct from Islam. They are not to be conflated.

Nadia speaks at length on the two different mindsets in Morocco: that which adheres to tradition, and that which pursues the ‘modern’. Islam plays a pivotal role in the traditional, and is rejected – at least in management practice – by those who desire to be ‘modern’ and want to keep “the professional life as the professional life”. However, the two mindsets are not wholly discrete – with many individuals they vary and oscillate according to context, hence a gap between ‘espoused’ values and ‘enacted’ behaviours. She provides an example of this gap from her business of advertising - whilst her clients “claim openness...They are afraid to move too far...” And Islam acts as a filter which “determines what images [she] can [is allowed to] play with”.

Nadia notes instances of authoritarian management practice in Morocco and she suggests that the ‘fear’ embedded in the culture from years of repression, together with Islamic beliefs, have resulted in the acceptance of practices that she has not witnessed in France. Culture shapes management practice still further through the presence of a form of patriarchy – based on fear and respect – which in her opinion is particular to Morocco. A further manifestation of this patriarchy is that women don’t hold the same position as men in the workplace. Nadia provides examples of the need to be accompanied by men to meetings with clients because “as a woman you are not credible enough”.

#### ***4.4 The Strangers***

The Strangers’ observations on how Islam and other influences shape management practice highlight the intertwining of Islam with other characteristics of the Moroccan national culture. It is this intertwining which in their view influences the behaviour and attitudes of Moroccans, which in turn shapes how management is practised. The *mélange* of the religious and the cultural which they observe is not always seen in a positive light; Moroccan Islam is regarded as a misinterpretation of Islam’s message and some Strangers ‘see’ hypocrisy, fear, and even exploitation of religious beliefs as a consequence. In particular, it is the Strangers, David and Nicolas, who highlight the Moroccan slant on *Insha’Allah* (God Willing) describing it as one which encourages irresponsibility and a passive acceptance of ‘fate’. This is cultural and not Islamic they say, because

“if you talk to the people who are linguistic (sic) people...(*insh’allah*) is meaning help yourself and God will help you. It is not allowing him to do the stuff for you” (David).

But in addition to religion and culture a third influence is felt to play a crucial role in modulating how Moroccan Islam can shape behaviour – and that is education. From the perspective of the Strangers, it is education which dictates the extent to which a Moroccan will adhere to Moroccan culture’s ingestion of Islam – as much to do with fate and destiny as it is to do with the Islam of the Qur’an – and the extent to which Moroccans embrace the ‘true’ or ‘pure’ Qur’anic message of Islam. Lack of education, together with culturally ingested Islam, and other cultural influences such as history of political repression combine to produce individuals who tend to lack initiative; be fearful; cling to tradition; abdicate responsibility in favour of dependency; and who are more likely to perpetuate the differences between

men and women in the workplace. As a consequence, management practice (reluctantly) leans towards the authoritarian. David believes that in 99.9 per cent of local Moroccan companies there “is a dictatorial patriarchal boss”, and as a result, trust and honesty in the workplace are a challenge for participants. Moroccans are simply not used to it. Interestingly, David ‘sees’ this patriarchy as a cultural characteristic deriving from the Berbers and therefore pre-dating Islam.

A good education – especially one with a strong foreign influence – is felt to produce a different and ‘modern’ type of employee. David calls these Moroccan employees “citizens of the world” whilst Atif describes them as “unbelievable...with much to offer”. In relation to these employees, management practice can more freely lean towards leading by example; encouraging teamwork; participation in decision-making; and having staff take responsibility for their actions at work to full effect.

Two further aspects of the Strangers’ perspective on Islam’s presence in the workplace are noteworthy, mainly because they resonate with other participant groups. First, that Islamic values have no greater force in the workplace than the values of other monotheistic religions have in their ‘home’ or ‘host countries’ (David, Nicolas and Paul). Second, that there appears to be a determined effort by some to take what is perceived as conspicuous or ‘excessive’ religiosity out of the workplace, e.g. the wearing of the hijab. As Atif divulges:

“if she is wearing the *hijab*...in my belief that person is not modern.... and is limited in their thinking.....I want someone who’s not obedient, who takes the initiative”.

A full account of the findings is set out in Figure 5.

**Figure 5: The Influences On Management Practice in Morocco**

Participants	The Gordian Knot				
	‘Living’ Islam	Moroccan Islam	National Characteristics	Socio-Economic Factors	Western Influence
Insiders	A presence in the workplace Values comparable to other monotheistic religions Personal Islamic values of humility, fraternity, solidarity, self-respect, believing in people	Mis-interpretation of <i>Insh’allah</i> leading to lack of personal responsibility and initiative Contradictions between doing Islam and doing business – gambling and alcohol in leisure and tourism	Paternalism/Patriarchy Different work attitudes of the young and old Importance of family ‘Special’ trust relationships Hospitality Specific cultural understanding of trust and respect	Low levels of education and skills leading to the desire for overseas private and public education Superior work performance of women Cultural pressure on women Equal treatment of women	French influence on the education and legal systems together with shaping business and management practices Hierarchy of the French Participative management style
Insiders-Outsiders	Personal nature of Islam Increased religiosity in the workplace Islamic values – honesty, trust, hard work, respecting others, transparency, honesty Different interpretations of Islam	The use of – and need for – <i>Baraka</i> in business The requirement for trust relationships in business Male attitudes to women cultural, not Islamic teachings	Patriarchy Lack of team-work Lack of drive to improve Lack of responsibility Lack of autonomy Importance of family	Education at home and at school Reluctance to self-improve Poverty and wealth influencing attitudes towards religion and work Improved attitudes towards women Tradition vs. the Modern	Personal enlightenment Moroccan émigrés
Outsiders-Insiders	Encourages respect for tradition Islam is a restrictive ‘filter’ in business Keeping Islam out of the workplace	The paradox/duality of Morocco – the push and pull of the traditional with the modern	Influence of Islam: patriarchy, fear and suppression Hospitality Importance of family	Unequal position of men and women in business Reluctance societally to move forward Western education levels superior	Women’s changing attitudes
Strangers	Islam is a personal relationship with God Islam open to interpretation Same values as other monotheistic religions Active attempts by some to keep ‘religiosity’ out of the workplace Mis-interpretation of Islam	The religious-cultural mix produces superstition, fatality, and a fatalistic interpretation of <i>Insha’allah</i> The influence of Moroccan Islam on work attitudes – subservience, adherence to patriarchy, lack of initiative	Respect for authority Reluctance to be proactive Does <u>not</u> thinkers Collective thinking Desire to be accepted Importance of hospitality Openness and genuiness Berber influence on leadership	Education levels shape Influence of Islam on attitudes towards women Morocco in transition	Recruitment of ‘citizens of the world’ ‘French Authoritarianism’ French influence on the legal system

## 5.0 Discussion

It was stated earlier that a particular challenge of this research was to ‘unravel’ this Gordian Knot of national characteristics in order to explore how Islamic values really do influence management practice. This has been attempted before, with Al Arkoubi (2008) and d’Iribarne (1998, 2002, 2003) both exploring how Islamic principles have shaped organizational behaviours. However, as each undertook an ethnographic study in one organization only, a more general ‘picture’ of management practice in Morocco remained elusive in an empirical sense. On a more theoretical level, unraveling multiple influences can be seen as problematic. The transition from one set of influences to another – say, from being a French colonial territory to independent nationalist Morocco- is far from simple. Bhabha (2006) has referred to the complex transcultural forms of influence that arise in such circumstances, along with the hybrid identities that characterise emergent societies and their peoples. Such hybridity in post-colonial societies including Morocco is deeply embedded in the contemporary national character. Indeed, ‘identity’ itself is essentially hybrid. This does not make identifying the influence of one factor – in the present study, Islamic values – impossible. It just makes the task complex, and alerts us to the interrelationship of multiple cultural, historical, national and – we would suggest – individual factors in reaching understanding of our topic.

In contrast to previous work, and listening to the voices of those who ‘do’ management, the present study has uncovered a larger ‘picture’ of management practice in Morocco. It includes many themes identified by earlier researchers, but in place of an intractable Gordian knot a ‘picture’ of management practice emerges which resembles an Arabesque -

“a decorative work of a kind that originated in Arabic or Moorish art consisting of flowing lines of branches, leaves, scroll work etc fancifully intertwined” (Shorter Oxford English Dictionary 2007 p 109)

Please see Figure 6 which is an example of an Arabesque.

**Figure 6: Example of an Arabesque**



The value of this metaphor as a heuristic device will be explored more fully below, after first identifying the branches, leaves and scrolls – the motifs – elicited from the participants themselves. These constitute how management practice is actually ‘done’ and ‘experienced’ in Morocco. As it is the focus of this research, we will begin with the motif of Islam.

### 5.1 ‘Living’ Islam

In all four groups of participants there is an overall view that Islam has a ‘real’ presence in the workplace beyond just the prayer room and shorter working hours during Ramadan, but views differ as to the extent of that presence, and indeed of its active influence. The study suggests that there are two dominant strains in how Islamic values influence management practice: first, that the influence of Islam on management practice varies with, and is contingent on, each individual’s own belief system; and second, a belief that Islam has no greater influence on interviewees’ practice than, for example, Christianity or Judaism has for their followers.

They believe their values are personal values, evidenced here by Atif:

“All the values that I have could be related to Islam...but I don’t follow them because I’m a Muslim...I believe in them because they are beautiful values not because they are Islamic values...”

The value system of Atif and Ismail (discussed earlier) *could* be derived from Islam, but in their own view, their value system – their adoption of Islamic values – is the result of education, experience and personal choice, freely made. Their ‘religiosity’ (Rokeach 1969, Gorsuch 1970) therefore is distinct from that of Abdul who actively engages with his religious beliefs in the workplace. Ismail and Atif are guided by similar principles but dissociate themselves *as individuals* from their religious connotations. They share the view that business and management should be kept entirely separate from religion. Instead, their management practice – embedding consultation in their leadership styles, treating employees as family, encouraging employees to take responsibility – could all be ‘seen’ to be underpinned by Islamic values (Muna 1980, Ali 2005) but for Ismail and Atif they are not essentially Islamic. They are first and foremost an expression of their individual temperament, ethics and sense of self.



The voices of Atif and Ismail lead directly into the second strain: that Islam has no greater influence on people's behaviours and therefore management practice than any other monotheistic religion on its (nominal) adherents.

## ***5.2 Islam versus Moroccan Islam***

The next motif is Moroccan Islam. Notably, participants attest that there are two forms of Islam in Morocco; first, 'pure' Islam taken from the teachings of the Qur'an and the *Sunna* (Sarwar and Toropov 2003, Ruthven 1997), and, second, an interpretation of Islam which could be described as a culture's ingestion of a religion. In the management sphere 'pure' Islam takes the form of Islamic ethics (Badawi 2003, Sadeq 2001) and the Islamic work ethic (Ali 1998, 1992, Yousef 2000, 2001), for example, the working practices of Abdul. The 'ingested Islam' we take to be that observed by Geertz (1968, 1973) who talks about the "warrior saint" and the belief in *Baraka*. It is Islam, but it is Moroccan Islam, as described here by Ahmad. It entwines with Morocco's (Berber) cultural traditions of mysticism, the evil eye (Stannard 1999), and their expectations of leadership (Geertz 1968, d'Iribarne 2002, 2003). It is the Sufi form of Islam – with emphasis on the mystical – that suits the Moroccan temperament (Gellner 1969, Geertz 1968, 1973). But belief in one form of Islam does not appear to exclude belief in the other and the research of d'Iribarne (2002, 2003) is testament to this.

He explores the "warrior saint" leadership that Moroccans - and 'Strangers' like David - recognize and expect, yet the leader he describes as a "warrior saint", just like Abdul, integrates the pure Islamic values of family, equality, trust, kindness and justice into practice. Al-Arkoubi (2008) cites the same values when she talks of her "spiritual leader" at her Moroccan organization. Thus, Islam and Moroccan Islam are not fixed, polarised positions on a spectrum: they are instead a flowing force that interplays, merges, and separates. They separate because Moroccan Islam is by 'definition' culturally entrenched. And because it is culturally entrenched, it commingles with other features of the "national character" (Tayeb 1988 p 154), taking on a different distinctive shape.

### ***5.3 National characteristics: family, paternalism and patriarchy***

The third motif in the Arabesque is the concept of family and within this umbrella term, patriarchy.

According to Zidan, the importance of family is both a Moroccan tradition **and** a part of Islamic teaching (Muna 1980, Latifi 1997, Al Arkoubi 2008). Other participants describe forms of their own – and observed – management practices which include care, support, and involvement in personal relationships that employees expect from their leaders (Latifi 1997, Al Arkoubi 2008).

But in Morocco there are cultural manifestations of the importance of family which also include paternalism and/or patriarchy (Al Arkoubi 2008, Wahabi 1993). It can, as Zidan reveals when he talks of the “big boss taking someone in”, also be about the extended family and patronage observed by Geertz (1979).

However, patriarchy is also associated with authoritarianism and *dirigiste* styles of leadership (Wahabi 1993, Ali 1990, Beekun and Badawi 1999). These are clearly apparent in management practice in Morocco. Whilst all participants convey a clear preference for their own leadership styles to be consistent with those identified as ‘best practice’ both in the West and in Arab countries (Northouse 2010, Beekun and Badawi 1999) – in other words, participative, honest, transparent, and leading by example – there are instances when this leadership style is not always evident or even possible in Moroccan organizations, where leadership is often authoritarian (Wahabi 1993). As David observes, an authoritarian or patriarchal (directive) style of leadership is often *expected* by some Moroccan employees.

### ***5.4 Socio-economic factors: education and gender***

Among the fourth motif of socio-economic factors education and gender especially were of interest to many of the participants as significant influences on management practice.

The participants did not just talk about formal education, but also life experiences including education in the home and abroad. The quality of education is a real challenge for Morocco (Cohen and Jaidi 2006, Sater 2010) and its management practices (Benson and Al Arkoubi 2006, Estrada, Lynham and Motii 2006). There was a common view across all participants that there is a shortage of suitably skilled and

qualified Moroccan candidates for their organizations. Those who have potential are described by David as “citizens of the world” - they are Moroccan, but they have been educated, or have worked, abroad. According to Omar and Atif, these ‘foreign’ experiences have taught them different attitudes to life and work from those which are entrenched in the Moroccan culture and learned in the family. These different attitudes include a willingness to learn, hard work, drive, initiative, independence and accountability. Many of these can be regarded as Islamic principles (Ali 1989, 1990, Ali and Al-Owaihnan 2008, Sadeq 2001).

This ‘traditional family education’ has further repercussions for the participants in their practice, as they endeavour to change the mind-sets of the majority of those exposed only to a Moroccan education who manifest acceptance, and even expectation, of authoritarianism; an expectation they will be provided for; resistance to change; and a reluctance to accept modern management techniques such as participative decision-making.

The issue of gender was also touched upon by some participants. Nadia and Fatiha, whilst from different biographical groups, both decry men’s attitudes toward women in the workplace – and the inequality embedded therein. But where they differ is in the reason why. Nadia (not a Muslim) ascribes it to Islam yet Fatiha, just like Mernissi (1991) argues that “the attitude of men here is not the true Islam. It’s cultural to lower women....” Meriem also refers to culture – ‘cultural pressure’ - when she explains that women do not take senior positions in organizations because of the importance of family and of being a mother in Moroccan society. For her it cannot be ascribed to Islam. This view does not resonate with Metcalfe’s (2006 p100) research in which the career and development constraints for women in Arab countries are as a result of “strong gender roles in Islamic culture.”

### ***5.5 Foreign influences***

The fifth and final motif is that of Western influence (Benson and Al Arkoubi 2006, Cox, Estrada, Lynham and Motii 2005, Al Arkoubi and McCourt 2004, Wahabi 1993). Views on Western influence on management in Morocco varied from Zidan’s opinion that hierarchy and authoritarianism in Morocco are enduring vestiges of French colonialism, to Aziz’s perception that managers increasingly pursue Western

management techniques such as participation and consultation. Zidan's view is that Morocco's 'inherited' hierarchy and authoritarianism are "comfortable [for Moroccans because] we have been educated in this manner", whilst David goes further to suggest that authoritarianism predates colonialism and is a result of Morocco's patriarchal culture. These views are contrary to those expressed by some (Wahabi 1993, Ali 1990, 1995, 1998, 2005) who speak negatively of the legacy of colonialism, believing it to be at the heart of the indecision, concern with wealth, authoritarian leadership and injustice inherent in Arab organizations, not something that sits comfortably with existing national culture.

### ***5.6 The Arabesque***

The five motifs of the Arabesque that have been identified by the participants as contributing to how management practice is shaped and experienced in Morocco are not dissimilar to those strands of the Gordian Knot identified (but not synthesized) by Benson and Al Arkoubi (2006), Wahabi (1993), Cox, Estrada, Lynham and Motii (2005). They are also consistent with those of Tayeb 1997, Robertson, Al-Khatib and Al-Habib (2002), Rice (1999) and Ali (1989). The present study has been exploratory, but penetrative, uncovering where and how –in the specific context of Morocco – each strand might play a role, and assessing the interplay between them. The metaphor of the Gordian Knot is supplanted by the metaphor of the Arabesque defined earlier and illustrated in figure six.

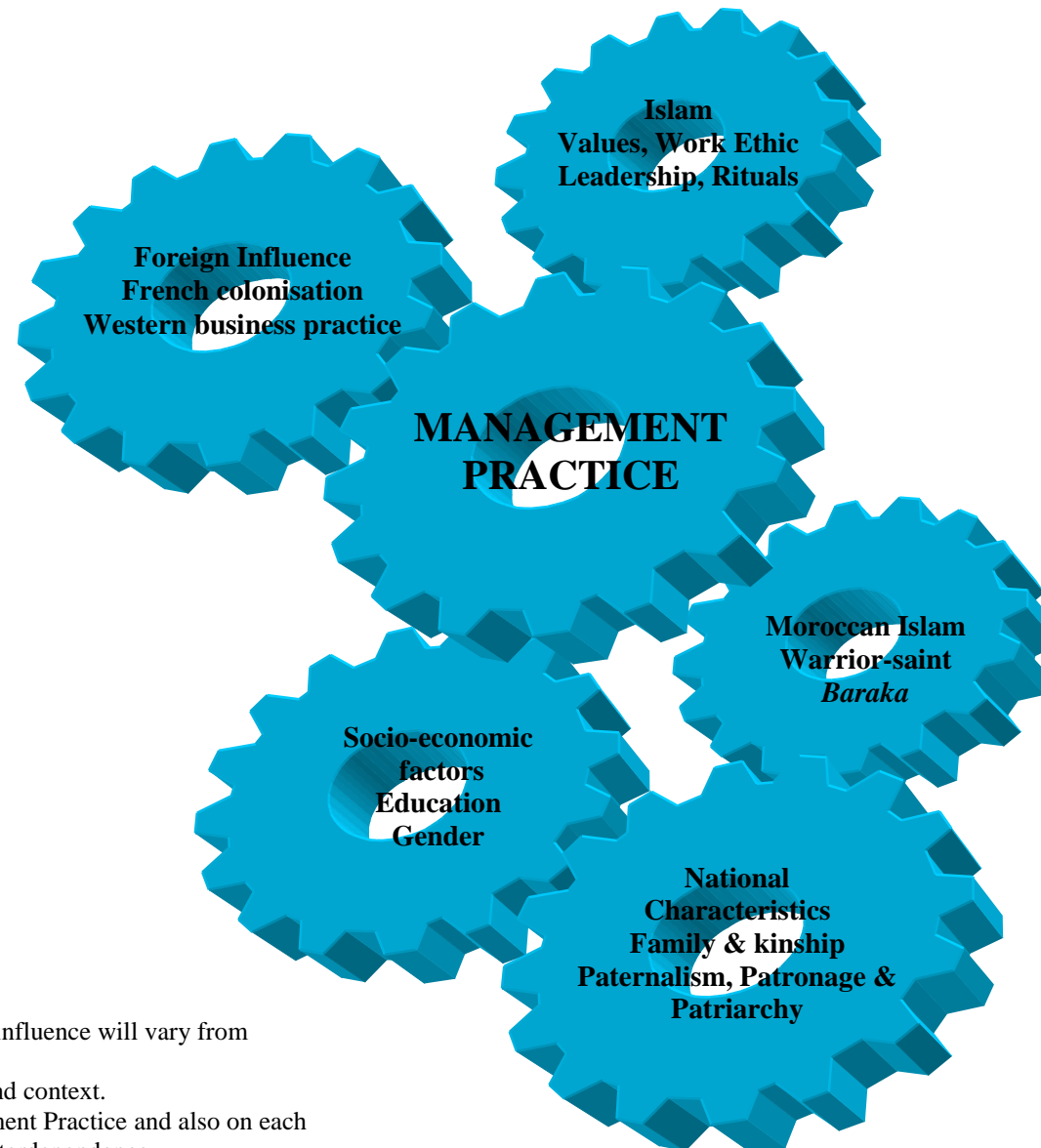
Made up of fluid and flowing lines fancifully intertwined to form plants or geometric shapes the Arabesque as a metaphor represents how the influences identified by the participants interact to create the 'life-worlds' they experience.

Thus the motifs of this life-world Arabesque are Islam, Moroccan Islam, national characteristics such as family and patriarchy, socio-economic factors such as education and gender, and some form of Western influence (both historically and contemporaneously). 'Culture' is specifically omitted from this list because the individual motifs when put together constitute that very culture. The pattern of the Arabesque may appear thus: Islam entwines with certain traditional Moroccan beliefs (Gellner 1969, Geertz 1968) to create Moroccan Islam which in turn wraps itself around 'family'. This entwining creates patriarchy – in

all its forms – which manifests itself within organizations in the three modes of “protector” (Tayeb 1979), “authoritarian” (Wahabi 1993) or “warrior saint” (Geertz 1968, 1973, d’Iribarne 1998, 2002, 2003).

But the Arabesque could have a different pattern, e.g., the force of “pure Islam” flows through family which is intricately interlaced with education, around which is wrapped foreign influence and this entwining produces creativity, hard work, transparency, trust and honesty within the workplace; all of which are Islamic values (Ali 2005). We do not suggest here that these are the only patterns. On the contrary, the Arabesque identified – whilst it invariably comprises the same motifs deployed in a superficially similar way – appears to take on multifarious individual patterns. Like the human face – where the components (nose, eyes, mouth, forehead etc) are constant and whose overall disposition likewise, but each shows unique individual identity. Thus with the Arabesque, the precise patterns and emphases of the five motifs, – though of an underlying consistency – will vary from individual to individual and what ‘influences’ that which each individual ‘experiences’ and ‘observes’ is their own socio-historic ‘life-world’ (Schutz 1964). And these five motifs are not each self-contained entities. They are all dynamically linked. And each has a linked effect on the other four and on the central entity of management practice as a whole. The motifs are like cogs in a machine and the underlying mechanics of these motifs in the dynamic and protean Arabesque are illustrated schematically in Figure 7.

**Figure 7: The Underlying Dynamics of the Influences in the Arabesque**



Notes:

- i. Not to scale. The relative importance of each influence will vary from individual to individual.
- ii. Dynamic in practice, variable by individual and context.
- iii. Influences make themselves felt on Management Practice and also on each other in a pattern of dynamic intertwining and interdependence.

## 6.0 Conclusion

The previous section identified how the multifarious influences which shape management practice in Morocco can best be represented by the metaphor of an Arabesque. The Arabesque represents all such influences. Within this, we have sought to identify the specific influence of Islamic values.

A number of Islamic values were consistently highlighted by the participants as playing a role in management practice in Morocco. These included: honesty, transparency, family, helping others, self-improvement, fraternity, trust, respect and co-operation. But how do they influence?

This depends largely on the individual him or herself. For the majority of ‘Strangers’ and our ‘Outsider-Insider’, just like the twists and turns of their individual Arabesques, their views on the influence of Islamic values are shaped by their individual socio-historic ‘life-worlds’ (Schutz 1964). Additionally, Islamic values shape the views of our Muslim participants through their own individual religiosity. We must therefore eschew the tempting but spurious neatness of an easy generalization and instead recognize the protean but vital ‘reality’ that there is no one single uniform set of Islamic values that will influence in one single uniform way. The influence of Islamic values on management practice can be conscious and deliberate, or unconscious and osmotic, formative or marginal, depending on how individuals make the decision to actively follow religious values, reject them, or accept them as part of the fabric of the “national character” (Tayeb 1988 p 154). However, what would appear to contribute hugely to that ‘decision’ is the education – at home, in schools, abroad – of each participant. As a result, the study of education might be the most promising area for further research and a platform for others to study management practice in Morocco.

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